



Connecticut State University American Association of University Professors

1615 Stanley Street • Marcus White Hall, Room 316 • New Britain, CT 06050

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Testimony by Patty O'Neill, President of the Connecticut State University - American Association of United Professors (CSU-AAUP) on Proposed FY 23 Adjustments for Higher Ed Agencies

Good evening members of the Higher Education Appropriations Subcommittee and thank you for this opportunity.

My name is Patty O'Neill and I'm president of the Connecticut State University - American Association of United Professors (CSU-AAUP). CSU-AAUP is the faculty union representing more than 3,000 full and part-time professors, coaches, counselors and librarians at the four regional universities.

The Connecticut State Universities serve first generation students, non-traditional students, traditional college-age students, and students whose first language is something other than English. We provide access to a first class education that facilitates the economic upward mobility of our students. I've had students who were the first in their families to graduate from college, and who are now pursuing graduate degrees.

But we do more than just provide a path towards economic improvement. We work to create lifelong learners, critical thinkers, and clear communicators who are willing to challenge their own assumptions and beliefs. The Connecticut State Universities, along with the other public institutions of higher education in Connecticut, are one of Connecticut's natural resources and should be supported accordingly.

For too long, though, that has not been the case. And this year the situation is more dire. You heard earlier today from Chief Financial Office of the CSCU System, Ben Barnes, about some of the unique challenges confronting the CSCU System. The pandemic decimated enrollment, and, accordingly, tuition and fee revenue. We have a once-in-a-decade 27th payroll to be covered. Add these factors to the reality that the block grants and fringe benefit support have not risen at the same rate as costs, and we have a serious problem that potentially imperils the missions of the universities.

It has been said, by many others, that budgets are moral documents that reflect the priorities and values of those creating them. We've also been told, for a decade, at least, to expect "to do more with less". When faced with once-in-a-lifetime event like Covid, combined with changes in demographics, the failures in the approach of doing more with less become acute. The governor's recommended adjustments for CSCU will leave it with a huge deficit. In the past, deficits led to deep cuts and tuition increases. President Cheng said earlier today that "We can't slash our way to success." We also can't treat our students as ATMs and rely on tuition increases, again, to solve financial difficulties. I urge members of

this committee to begin to treat public higher education in Connecticut as the natural resource it is and to devise a budget that reflects that priority.